

**Mentoring Program Handbook**  
*A Guide for Human Resources Professionals at NASA*

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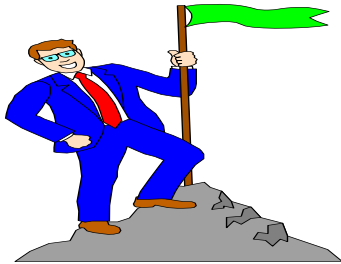
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# MENTORING PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Mentoring can play a key role in developing one's career. In its general form, the mentoring partnership is an agreement between two people sharing experiences and expertise to help with personal and professional growth. In mentoring's usual form, a mentor is someone of substantial experience, talent or professional standing who nurtures the career of a mentee (e. g., apprentice, intern or understudy).

There are many types of mentoring relationships. For example, there is supervisory mentoring, formal mentoring, situational mentoring and informal mentoring that takes place in the work environment. The key to successful mentoring is to recognize and respect each other's strengths and differences, clarify expectations and roles, establish clear goals and a mentoring action plan, and to manage the "logistics" of the mentoring process to ensure meetings take place.

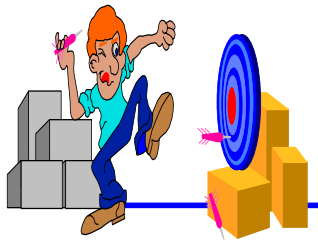
## Types of Mentoring Relationships:



**Supervisory mentoring**



**Formal mentoring:  
beginning & end**



**Situational mentoring:  
right help at the right time**



**Informal mentoring: nurtured over a  
long period of time**

**Supervisory mentors** share valuable information about the organization and provide meaningful work and developmental learning opportunities. They expose employees to the values of the organization (i.e. who and what gets rewarded or punished) and they

help employees position themselves with the skills necessary for success.

**Situational mentoring** is the right help at the right time. It is those spontaneous connections--a brief introduction at a conference, on an airplane or in a business meeting--just enough help to solve a problem or uncover a hidden talent.

**Informal mentoring** is probably the type of mentoring connection most people can relate to and have previously experienced. It is an informal mentoring relationship built on mutual trust, respect and the sharing of ideas and experiences.

**A formal mentoring partnership** is comprehensive and includes a facilitated matching process, formal training and clear goals for measuring success. Formal mentoring is very attractive to most organizations because it involves employees, not only in their own growth and development, but also in the growth and development of the organization.

A formal mentoring program is a system for encouraging more widespread development of these relationships. A formal mentoring program offers a structured approach to developing employee talents and abilities. A formal mentoring process capitalizes on the experiences of successful individuals (mentors) in the organization who are committed to helping develop a highly skilled, high-performing workforce. Having the wise counsel and advice of an experienced colleague can help employees handle difficult situations, accelerate their development, and avoid some of the pitfalls that can derail a career or delay career advancement.

A formal mentoring program is not a one-shot training event. It is a facilitated process, enabling employees to define and design their own professional development plans linked to the strategic goals of the organization. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for all NASA employees to benefit from developing a mentoring relationship or adding structure to an existing one. The program:

- Creates opportunities for frequent and open interaction between employees at different organizational levels;
- Provides relationship-building activities to share organizational knowledge;
- Serves as a vehicle for transferring formal and informal organizational knowledge;
- Enhances communication and collaboration at all levels;
- Fosters an open environment where information is shared;
- Improves individual motivation, performance and innovation.

A formalized mentoring program also helps mentees:

- Take charge of their careers;
- Grow personally and professionally by taking advantage of resident corporate knowledge;
- Gain a broader view of NASA and how his/her work impacts the mission; and
- Increase visibility and gain exposure to organizational values, relationships and business.

A formalized mentoring program helps mentors

- Understand the needs of employees and the organization better;
- Gain a fresh perspective on their work and the value of helping others;
- Share their knowledge and expertise with others through mentoring partnerships; and
- Develop potential resources for assistance on projects.

Mentors have the opportunity to share their knowledge, experience, and insight into how to get things accomplished; give back to the organization; and build trust through increased communication. Most importantly, mentors have the opportunity to see the impact of their efforts on the professional and personal growth of their mentees. The best mentors combine technical competence, experience, the ability to communicate, and most importantly the ability to listen.

Mentees receive an opportunity to have someone to talk with who can provide feedback on strengths, shortcomings, and possible impacts on career choices or aspirations. Another possible benefit to the mentee is increased organizational awareness and encouragement to reach his or her full potential. The program provides mentees with excellent networking opportunities, formal and informal training to enhance their technical and communication skills, and a renewed belief in themselves and the importance of their roles in the organization.

In a formal mentoring program, mentoring partnerships may be self-selected or established through a systematic matching process. Once participants are matched, there is a required training session for all mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees sign a mentoring agreement that serves as an official commitment of time and effort for the mentor, mentee, and the mentee's supervisor. The success of the mentoring relationship depends greatly on how well the mentoring relationship is defined. The mentor and mentee need to know each other's expectations. Once they have a clear understanding of these expectations they will be able to ensure that each other's expectations are being met. This process is normally done through the creation of a Mentoring Action Plan.

Formalized mentoring programs are designed to expose employees to a variety of learning experiences, yet flexible enough to be fine-tuned to each individual's own developmental needs. Formalized programs have interlocking developmental activities—each experience building on previous experiences, all supported by an active mentoring partnership. Successful formalized programs typically contain some of the following features:

### **Meetings With Mentors**

Mentees have an opportunity to capitalize on the wisdom of a mentor's experience. Mentoring meetings help mentees hone their personal and professional capabilities while increasing their individual and organizational effectiveness.

### **Mentoring Training And Progress Reviews**

Both mentees and mentors receive required formal training prior to entering into the mentoring partnership. They will also participate in mid-point progress and end of program reviews. The reviews provide participants an opportunity to benchmark progress, uncover problems and recommend improvements or adjustments to the program design.

### **Assessments and 360 Feedback**

Mentees complete a behavioral assessment tool known as a 360 multi-rater assessment tool. Each participant receives confidential and personalized reports as an output of these web-based assessment tools. Feedback provides mentees an opportunity to target developmental needs and develop effective mentoring action plans.

### **Mentoring Action Plans**

Mentees design and define a Mentoring Action Plan (MAP) with assistance from his/her mentor. The MAP is based on a joint assessment of the mentee's developmental needs. The MAP includes some of the following developmental activities:

- **Developmental Assignment**  
Each mentee works with his/her mentor to identify and complete at least one developmental assignment. The developmental assignment highlights the mastering of a new skill or competency. According to the mentee's goals, these assignments could include a variety of activities, such as writing an article, giving a briefing, taking a course on-line, or reading a book and discussing it with the mentor.
- **Networking Opportunities**  
Mentees attend at least one networking opportunity. Participating in networking opportunities help mentees develop relationships, gain exposure, and increase visibility.

- **Mentoring Forums**  
The focus of these forums is to enhance skills and competencies. The forums also allow the mentees to draw on the experiences of the larger mentor group, providing them more opportunities for growth and enabling them to gain a broader perspective of the organization.
- **Mentor Coaching Sessions**  
The purpose of this training is to give added value to the mentors and to build within the agency or organization a pool of dedicated and highly effective mentors. Each session delivers skills and knowledge that the mentors can use at a particular point in the mentoring process. For example, a training Session on Developmental Planning may be delivered as the mentees are working on their Mentoring Action Plans. Thus, the mentors could build skills that would increase their effectiveness just in time throughout the one-year mentoring program. Mentors would also learn how to ask thought-provoking questions to help their mentees take responsibility for their choices and their careers, how to listen and share wisdom without giving advice, and other essential coaching skills.

## Mentor Characteristics

A successful mentor should be:

- **People Oriented:**  
One who is genuinely interested in people and has a desire to help others develop and grow. A successful mentor is one who provides adequate time with the mentee and has "good" people skills" and knows how to effectively communicate and actively listen. A mentor must also be able to resolve conflicts and give appropriate feedback.
- **Good Motivator:**  
A mentor needs to be able to motivate a mentee through encouraging feedback and challenging work assignments. A mentor once described this characteristic by saying, "a mentor needs to stretch the mentee's potential, setting new limits for what the mentee can do."
- **Effective Teacher:**  
A mentor must thoroughly understand skills required by the mentee's position and goals, and be able to effectively teach these skills to his or her mentee. A mentor must not only teach the "skills of the trade," but also manage the learning of the mentee.
- **Secure in Position:**  
A mentor must be confident in his or her career so pride for the mentee's accomplishments can be genuinely expressed. A mentor should appreciate a mentee's developing strengths and abilities, without viewing these accomplishments as a threat. A secure mentor delights in a mentee's discoveries and welcomes a mentee's achievements. A mentor enjoys being a part of the mentee's growth and expansion.
- **Achiever:**  
A mentor is an achiever -- one who sets career goals, continually evaluates goals, and strives to reach them. A successful mentor is usually one who takes on more responsibility than is required, volunteers for more activities, and tends to climb the proverbial career ladder at a quick pace. A mentor attempts to inspire a mentee with the same drive for achievement.
- **NASA Values and Work:**  
A mentor takes pride in NASA. A mentor understands NASA's mission, vision, and values and supports NASA's initiatives. A mentor is respected by his or her peers and management and serves as a role model. Keep in mind that a mentee looks to his or her mentor for guidance on interpreting policies and procedures. In order to provide this guidance, you need to know and understand this information.



- **Respects Others:**

A mentor is one who shows respect for another's well-being. Every person, including the mentor, has certain vulnerabilities and imperfections that must be accepted. A mentor should learn to accept a mentee's weaknesses and minor flaws, just as the mentee must learn to accept the weaknesses and flaws of the mentor. Mentors can, in fact, help a mentee explore his or her vulnerabilities and imperfections. Without passing judgment, a mentor must also recognize that differences in opinions, values, and interests will exist. By accepting such differences, a mentor projects openness to others. Not all of these characteristics are equally found in every one.

## **Desired Characteristics of a Mentee**

A successful mentoring relationship not only depends on the characteristics of the mentor, but also on the characteristics of the mentee. The following are characteristics of the "ideal" mentee.

### **Eagerness to Learn:**

A mentee has a strong desire to learn new skills and abilities, or a desire to develop existing skills and abilities. A mentee seeks educational and/or training opportunities whenever possible to broaden his or her capabilities. A mentee strives to elevate his or her level of technical skills and professional expertise to gain a greater mastery of the job.

### **Ability to Work as a Team Player:**

A mentee usually must interact with many others as a part of the requirement of his or her position. It is important the mentee cooperate and communicate with these others. A mentee must be a team player and contribute as much as possible to the mentoring relationship. To do this, a mentee should:

1. Initiate and participate in discussions
2. Seek information and opinions
3. Suggest a plan for reaching goals
4. Clarify or elaborate on ideas
5. Resolve differences
6. Be fair with praise and criticism
7. Accept praise and criticism.

### **Patient:**

A mentee must be willing to put time and effort into the mentoring relationship. A mentee must persevere through the difficulties that arise during the learning process. A mentee should be realistic enough to know that career advancement doesn't happen overnight.

### **Risk Taker:**

A mentee must be willing to travel from "safe harbor" into the seas of uncertainty. This means that a mentee must move beyond tasks that he or she has mastered and accept new and more challenging experiences. Task changes are never easy. A mentee must realize to grow professionally, it is necessary to assess oneself, to acquire needed skills, to develop new skills, and to make contact with others. A mentee must be willing to take chances! "Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved with experimenting with his own life." Herbert Otto

### **Positive Attitude:**

This is the most important trait for a mentee to possess because it is a bright and hopeful attitude that can help a mentee succeed. A mentee with a poor or "defeatist" attitude will not move ahead—the first "bump in the road" will jar this person off course. An optimistic mentee is more likely to tackle difficulties and to stay on course. A mentee should not be afraid to fail.

Just as a mentor is more than a teacher, a mentee is more than a student. A mentee, as a bright and motivated individual, is the future of an organization; the insurance that a well-trained, high-quality workforce will exist to meet long-term employment needs. A mentee is an achiever --"groomed" for advancement by being provided opportunities to excel beyond the limits of his or her position. Most people imagine a mentee to be new to the working world; however, there are two types of mentees. The first type is the person new to the NASA, who needs to be taught everything about the workplace. The second type of mentee is the seasoned, sophisticated person who may have been promoted or transferred to a new assignment. This type of mentee already knows the "survival skills," and how to interact with others. The seasoned mentee typically needs to be instructed only on the inner workings and policies specific to his/her new assignment.

## **Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Mentee**

Mentees are self-motivated individuals who are committed to life-long learning. The roles and responsibilities of mentees are to:

- Take initiative and be proactive in his/her own career development.
- Develop a mentoring contract/agreement that clarifies the expectations of the mentoring partnership.
- Keep the supervisor informed of mentoring progress and schedule to ensure that it does not conflict with assignments and priorities.
- Attend formal mentoring training, progress reviews, and forums.
- Participate in open and honest discussions with the mentor.
- Develop a Mentoring Action Plan (MAP) with feedback from mentors and supervisors.
- Provide feedback on the design of the program and the effectiveness of the mentoring partnership via anonymous surveys at the mid-point and the end of program.
- Meet with the mentor approximately four hours a month, at least touching base weekly.

### **Mentor**

The roles and responsibilities of the mentor are to:

- Demonstrate a willingness to commit to the mentoring process.
- Develop a mentoring contract/agreement clarifying the expectations of the mentoring partnership.
- Assist in developing and monitoring the mentee's Mentoring Action Plan (MAP).
- Meet (or connect) with the mentee at least once a week and plan to spend an average of four hours a month working with the mentee.
- Attend formal mentoring training, mentor-the-mentor sessions, progress reviews, and forums.
- Assume four main coaching roles:

**Teacher:** Assisting mentee in setting developmental goals and plans to achieve them.

**Counselor:** Discussing work-related concerns impeding performance or career growth.

**Guide:** Sharing organizational knowledge gained from personal experience.

**Challenger:** Providing objective and honest feedback.

- Participate in meetings with the mentee and his/her supervisor to discuss the mentee's MAP.
- Provide feedback on the design of the program and the effectiveness of the mentoring partnership via anonymous surveys at the mid-point and the end of program.
- Act as a sounding board for the mentee.
- Assist the mentee in setting developmental goals.
- Provide developmental feedback to the mentee.

### **Supervisor**

The supervisor plays a critical role in the success of the mentoring partnership. He/she can reinforce the learning by providing timely feedback and opportunities to practice new skills. The supervisor will also provide feedback on the overall mentoring process and design. The roles and responsibilities of the supervisor are to:

- Meet or coordinate with the subordinate and his/her mentor to discuss the Mentoring Action Plan (MAP).
- Support the employee in the developmental process to assist in the successful completion of his/her MAP.
- Give feedback on the Mentoring Program progress and design during the mid and end-of-program review.

Mentoring brings value to everyone involved in its practice: mentees, mentors, supervisors and the organization(s) for which they work. Mentees have an opportunity to gain wisdom from someone who has traveled the path before them. Mentors have an opportunity to invest themselves in someone who seeks what they can offer. The organization has the opportunity to share and spread its acquired learning and know-how. In addition to those who are directly involved in its practice, mentoring also helps the community at large because it fosters an environment in which people work together and assist one another in their drive to become better skilled, more intelligent individuals.

Many of the NASA Centers have formal mentoring programs. For information on your center's program, contact your Headquarters or Center Training Officer. Three currently active Mentoring Programs are at NASA Headquarters, Goddard Space Flight Center, and Johnson Space Center. For information please see the following web sites: For GSFC, <http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/DevPrograms/Mentor/mentor.htm> For HQ, <http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/HQ/Mentoring/home.htm> For JSC, <http://jscpeople.jsc.nasa.gov/mentoring>

